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READ AND LET OTHERS READ
Why do we face Grief & Sorrows in our Lives?
In the Light of Quran & Sunnah

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

The more we ponder and reflect on the universe around us, the easier it is to come to the conclusion that its creator is Omnipotent and the Most Gracious, Merciful and Wise. The very same Creator who made such a vast and beautiful universe has also made an excellent provision for the fulfillment of the needs of all His creation. The deeper we ponder on His creation both great and small, the more in awe and amazed we will be at His wisdom and perfection. This same Lord has bestowed upon us innumerable blessings, although we cannot claim any right to them. Despite recognising this fact, we find ourselves defiant and struggling to cope with what we perceive as our sorrows, hardships, afflictions and deprivations in this world. It would be so much easier to come to terms with all our problems if we could just accept the fact that He is not unjust to us in the least. We need to remind ourselves that even if we find ourselves in adverse circumstances, it is part of His plan for us which stems from Him being the All Knowing, the All Wise.

Reasons for Adversities and Hardships

To Provide an Opportunity to Repent and Reform

The real success is that of the Hereafter. When we live our lives disobeying Allah, we are destroying both our life in this world as well as the Hereafter. Allah wants us to succeed in the Hereafter and when He sees us treading the paths that lead to Hell, He inflicts sorrows and adversities on us in order to draw our attention to our deeds. In the Quran, He tells us:*"Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness."* **(42:30)**

To understand this, think of a benevolent teacher, who motivated by love rather than enmity, scolds and punishes a student who fails his monthly exams. He does this so that the student will take his studies seriously and succeed in his final exam, thus not losing a full academic year. It is therefore a great favour of Allah upon us that He gives us an opportunity for reflection, repentance and reform.

Expiation of Sins and Purification of the Heart

Sometimes, Allah puts us through difficulties to help us eliminate our weaknesses, purify our hearts and strengthen our character. If we remain steadfast in the face of difficulties and handle them with patience, fortitude and courage, He makes these difficulties an expiation of our sins. As it is, trials and tribulations make us aware of our faults so that we may focus on reforming ourselves and thus refine our character. Additionally, when we are faced with adversities, we need to remind ourselves that Allah has not forgotten us; in fact when our lives start to get too comfortable and problem-free we should worry about the fact that Allah may have forgotten us. Our Prophet (SAW) said: *"A Muslim male or female remains subject to trials (in this world) with respect to self, children and property till he or she faces Allah, the Exalted, (on the Day of Judgment) in a state in which all his or her sins have been remitted."* **(Tirmidhi)**

Elevation of Ranks

Allah puts His people through trials and the more successfully we are able to pass through them by bearing them with unflinching faith and confidence, the greater will be the elevation of our ranks in the Hereafter and the more we will be endowed with stronger Eeman (faith) in this world. Allah's Messenger (SAW) said, *"The magnitude of the reward goes along with the magnitude of the affliction. When Allah, Who is Great and Glorious, loves people He afflicts them, and those who accept it gladly receive Allah's good pleasure, but those who are displeased receive Allah's displeasure."* **(Tirmidhi)**

If Ibrahim (AS) had been upset with Allah and given in to Nimrod's demands in order to save himself from being thrown into the fire, he would have been deprived of that confidence and surety of faith which was the result of being saved from the fire. Nor would he have been known as the **'Imaam un Naas'** – the leader of the people, which was the outcome of

passing successfully through these trials and tribulations. Similarly, the difficulties undergone by Yusuf (AS) which were inflicted upon him by his brothers, the people of the caravan and Zuleikha, paved the way for Yusuf (AS) to become the Aziz of Egypt.

Allah tells us in the Quran: *"It may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good."* **(4:19)**

Happiness and sorrow are the means through which Allah trains a believer to become patient, grateful, courageous and a spiritually strong person. In this way, he reaches the level of Nafs-e-Mutmainna (a soul at peace) and thus achieves the permanent success of the Hereafter.

Being Saved from Future Calamities

In the story narrated in the Quran about Musa (AS) and Khidr, Khidr damaged the boat of some poor people and killed a boy. This appeared to violate the demands of justice and wisdom at the time. Later, Khidr explained that there was a king who was confiscating the boats of people and he flawed the boat so that the king, considering it defective, would not confiscate it. The poor owners would be able to repair it and thus not be deprived of their only tool of trade and source of income. As for the boy Khidr killed, he would have grown up to be undutiful to his parents and put them through trials in their old age and Allah wanted to replace him with pious and dutiful offspring.

Allah Helps us in Our Difficult Times

- *"On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear."* **(Quran 2:286)**

- If people truly wish to be successful in the test they are put through and face it with firm resolve and courage, then when they begin to falter, Allah helps them to set themselves aright. Musa (AS)'s mother, acting on inspiration from Allah, cast her son into the river, but her emotions overpowered her and her heart became devoid of patience. Allah says in the Quran: *"But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: she was going almost to disclose his (case) had We not strengthened her heart (with faith) so that she might remain a (firm) believer."* **(28:10)**

- The more difficult the trial and the more a person is ready to suffer loss for the sake of Allah, the greater the level of help bestowed by Allah. The life of Ibrahim (AS) bears testimony to this fact.

The Cure for Grief

A Thing to Remember

We should know with certainty that this world is not the place for loss or gain, success or failure, happiness or sorrow; it is a place of test and only that. Here, adversities, be they grief, hardships, problems or deprivations exist so that we do not start thinking of this transient world as our permanent abode and forget that our goal should be the Paradise of the Hereafter. Our Most Gracious and Merciful Lord desires that we should be scalded by the fire of grief and anxieties so that we do not become heedless. He wants us to try our utmost to distance ourselves from the Hell-Fire. He wants us to experience deprivation in this world so that we will have some idea of what it will feel to be deprived of Paradise in the next. If by experiencing trials and tribulations such as being handicapped or divorced or slandered or childless or being on the receiving end of injustice or experiencing business failure etc., one will gain entry to Paradise, then for Allah these troubles are very minor. Our Lord knows that, after bearing all these trials patiently, if we succeed in His test and ultimately reach Paradise, we will consider them a great blessing for us.

Our problems stem from the fact that we want to make this world before death our Paradise. Hence, our failure to accomplish our worldly desires becomes the greatest source of our distress, whereas the Creator has not created the sort of conditions in this world where a person can make this earth his Paradise. If only we can understand this reality and plan our lives

accordingly, then we will have moulded ourselves into the kind of people who will become eligible for entry into the eternal Paradise. We should try very hard to not let our grief overcome us so much that we become incapable of doing anything constructive. If we constantly cry and complain, trying hard to get sympathy from others rather than using this short life to earn for the Hereafter, then truly, we will have made a bad bargain and suffered a sad loss. When problems come our way, we need to become attentive and like good students, focus on learning from them.

An Attitude of Gratefulness

Our Prophet (SAW) said: *"(In worldly matters) look at the one who is inferior to you and do not look at the one who is superior to you. In this way you will not look down on the bounties that Allah has bestowed upon you."* **(Tirmidhi)**

People have been endowed differently and so Allah tests them differently in this world. Sheikh Saadi tells us that he had no shoes and when he saw some people wearing shoes, he felt deprived because Allah had given them shoes and left him barefooted. Just as he was thinking this, he saw a person who had only one limb and on seeing this, he immediately thanked Allah that He had bestowed him with limbs.

- We do not notice the innumerable blessings of Allah that are being showered upon us night and day, but when faced with a situation which is undesirable to us, we start complaining. In times of adversity we should focus on all those bounties and blessings that have been bestowed upon us. People should look at their intact bodies, their health, their well-being and so many other blessings. To appreciate the value of good health, one should visit hospitals whenever one can. We should remind ourselves of the biggest favour upon us – that of Emaan. We should look at the long list of blessings bestowed upon us by Allah and ask ourselves what right we have to these. As a result, we will feel an immense sense of gratitude in our hearts and the thought of having so much will offset our grief and sense of deprivation.

- We should thank Allah everyday for all those past experiences when we received special help from Him. Remembering all this will reinforce our Emaan, and we will certainly feel that Allah is sufficient for us in all circumstances and that whatever He has done for us before, He can do for us again. Not only should we remember and be grateful for all the past blessings, but we should also try to visualise all the blessings and bounties that are still to come! This is the best and surest way to lead a peaceful and contented life. We should worry about nothing, nor grieve over anything. By completely relying on Allah's Omnipotence and Kindness and by being grateful for all the past and future blessings, our troubles will soon seem inconsequential and make a difficult path easy to traverse.

Patience (Sabr)

By giving us grief and happiness, adversity and prosperity in turns, Allah tests us. The patient person is the one who does not despair of the mercy of Allah in adversity and does not become overtly exultant at times of happiness and success. To cultivate sabr, it is important to keep reflecting on the following reality.

Belief in the Hereafter

If our innumerable difficulties are making us despondent or our successes are making us overtly exultant and arrogant, then, to cultivate sabr, we should strengthen our faith in the Hereafter as much as we can. When we remind ourselves that this worldly life which is full of difficulties, is transient and the life after death is permanent, we will remain steadfast on the right path. After all, life is so brief, the worrying moments even briefer, and in no more than a few years, we will be dust and there will be no more tests of our patience. There will only be the Grace and Mercy of Allah, the never-ending blessings, palaces studded with jewels, gardens of musk and amber, rivers of milk and honey, trees of gold and silver, the greetings of the angels, the company of the righteous, and a variety of foods of different delicious flavours. There will be no regrets of the past or fears for the future. Thinking

about all this should convince us that the unfortunate person is not the one who does not achieve worldly success, but unfortunate is the one who will not be successful in the permanent Afterlife.

Glad Tidings in the Quran for those Who are Patient

- *"And Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast."* **(3:146)**
- *"O you who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere."* **(2:153)**
- *"Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!"* **(39:10)**
- *Angels shall enter unto the patient from every gate (with the salutation): 'Peace unto you for that you persevered in patience!'"* **(13:24)**

To encourage ourselves to be patient in bearing the transient hardships, all we have to do is to just look at the enormous rewards being promised and who it is that is making this promise to us.

Some Important Warnings

- Our Prophet (SAW) said: *"Verily, the patience is at the first stroke of a calamity."* **(Bukhari)** Later on, even the most impatient person, in any case, will have no other choice but to be patient at whatever befell him.
- Exercising patience does not mean that one should not try out different permissible ways of alleviating the distress, such as a patient seeking treatment or the needy looking for a means of earning. However, patience demands that all these efforts should be done with constancy, courage and in a dignified manner rather than in a complaining or aggressive manner. Complaining to others simply means that a complaint is being made about a Merciful to a non-merciful being.
- Our Prophet (SAW) said: *"Let no one among you wish for death due to any hardship that may befall him. But if one has no other choice, but to do so, one should say: "O Allah! Grant me life as long as life is good for me, and cause me to die when death is better for me."* **(Tirmidhi)**
- Despite the immense importance and reward for being patient, people should continue to ask Allah for well-being. They should never desire that problems should come their way and thus give them the opportunity to elevate their ranks through exercising patience. However, what is acceptable is that if Allah does inflict any distress on us, then we should exercise self-restraint and ask Allah to bestow patience upon us because it is something that can only be bestowed by Him.
- To express sorrow at the time of distress is natural, but even at times of immense sorrow, no such words should be uttered which are Islamically unacceptable.

Belief in Qadr (Preordainment)

Belief in preordainment does not mean that no effort is made to alleviate the distress; what it does mean is, in fact, that utmost efforts should be made to alleviate the distress but if there is no success in doing so, we should not be upset. We must have complete faith that it was preordained, that our Lord wishes to test us and to expiate our sins and we should try our best to succeed in this test. So we should be patient, and at the same time, refrain from non-permissible ways of getting relief. Allah will then certainly reward us for this. Allah tells us in the Quran: *"No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence, that is truly easy for Allah. In order that you may not despair over matters that pass you by nor exult over favors bestowed upon you."* **(57:22-23)**

Istighfar

The Prophet (SAW) said: *"If anyone continually asks pardon, Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress, and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide for him from where he did not reckon."* **(Abu Dawud)**

Sympathising with those in Distress

Our Prophet (SAW) said: *" Allah is at the back of a servant so long as the servant is at the back of his brother."* **(Muslim)**

Consulting Allah before Taking Decisions

Before making decisions in life, we should seek Allah's guidance and consult Him through Istikhara. The companions said that the Prophet (SAW) would teach them Al-Istikhara for all of their affairs as he would teach them a surah from the Qur'an.

Connection with the Quran

Allah tells us in the Quran: *"But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement."* **(20:124)**

Being ignorant of the Quran and its message is like driving a car without knowing the traffic rules and regulations or like travelling on a dark night along an unknown route that has no lights along the road. There are naturally hazards at every step of the way.

The Quran tells us of those deeds that are liked by Allah and those deeds that earn His Wrath, so that we may be guided accordingly. Additionally, as all the parts of our body are in constant submission to Allah , if we can submit our will to Allah even in areas where we have been given free will, we will be afforded peace of mind; otherwise our situation will be like that of the car in which every wheel is trying to move in a different direction. We should make the Quran the purpose of our lives and spend our days and nights supplicating and making an effort to learn and teach the Quran. When we will immerse ourselves in achieving a great purpose such as this, we will not even remember our other anxieties and will become worthy of receiving the good news promised to us in the Quran: *"Allah will certainly aid those who aid His (cause); for verily Allah is Full of Strength Exalted in Might (Able to enforce His Will)."* **(22:40)**

Tawakkul (Trust in Allah)

Actually it is Allah who does everything for us. If we can truly believe this and the fact that He is Most Merciful to the believers, then we will be prepared to happily deliver ourselves to Him in all our affairs. As soon as we do this, we will be free from all grief and worries. Tawakkul is a state of the heart. Using all the means available, but trusting in Allah and not on the means or one's efforts is what tawakkul is about. Allah is our Master and we are His servants. In the same way a servant is obliged to obey his master, the master is also obliged to look after the needs of his servant. If we can become Allah's servants completely and not worship anyone but Him or ask anyone else except Him for our needs, then it is not possible that He will not fulfill His part of the bargain. He is the Most Honourable and anyone who strikes a deal with Him can never lose. His plan is more perfect than all our plans put together, so we should deliver our affairs to Him. Imagine a person who has a travelling companion who is fully familiar with the way and knows how to deal with all the possible problems one can encounter. He has already prepared a perfect map and has reassured us that there will be no unforeseen problems along the way. Despite the fact that this companion can be fully relied upon, the traveller is worried. But this is not the case with a believer; a believer's heart is free from all irrational fears. He has firmly grasped Allah's rope (Quran) and has stepped on to the path of life with courage and determination. The problems and difficulties along the way do not make him anxious; he has complete confidence and trust in Allah.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Allah is our Lord and True Friend. We have to bow down only to Him and to address Him alone for all our needs. Irrespective of what we may perceive, only Allah can bestow blessings upon us and alleviate our grief and distress. Despite the fact that we have made people the focus of our fears and hopes, they do not have the ability to provide for us. The more we adopt such an attitude of dependence on Allah Alone, the more Allah makes us independent of people and liberates us permanently from the fatal emotion of fear which deprives so many people of their peace of mind. Complete trust in Allah and the resultant happiness and contentment is the best and

most comprehensive solution to all the problems in our lives. We must remember that there is a substitute for every deprivation in our lives but if we let go of Allah in our lives, there is no substitute for Him.

We must realise and accept that Allah is the Protecting Guardian and Helper of the believers, and that He is Most Merciful to them. At a time when we are afraid, we should draw on the strength of our faith and tell our fearful self, with courage, that nothing in the universe can frighten us. Allah tells us in the Quran: *"Is not Allah enough for His servant?"* **(39:36)**

When a child wakes up in the darkness and starts to cry from fear, we tell the child not to be afraid, as there is nothing there to frighten the child. After negating the child's fear, we reassure the child with the things that are physically there. For instance, we say that since we are with the child, nothing can dare cause harm. In this way we reassure the child of our presence and our ability to protect the child and once the child is convinced of our strength and ability to do so, the child goes back to sleep. The same strategy should be adopted when we are faced with fear or grief. First, we should negate the causes of fear. We should convince ourselves, with confidence and courage, that we should not be afraid of anything in the world except Allah . We know this to be true as Allah is Merciful to a believer and more affectionate than seventy mothers.

A true believer can never be afraid of anyone in the world except Allah. And how can a believer live in fear when all things are created by Allah and are in His control? Till the Creator, Sovereign and Master does not want it so, nothing can harm us. The command is only with Allah and the forelock of all His creation is in His grasp. We should be afraid of only His Anger and Wrath. Everything is in His hands and controlled by Him and all of creation are simply beggars before Him. They have no power to give benefit, nor cause harm. Our Prophet (SAW) said: *"If you need something, ask Allah, and when you need help, solicit Allah alone for the same. Bear it in mind that if all the people combined together to grant you some benefit, they would not be able to do so, except that which Allah has determined for you and that if all of them were combined together to do you harm, they would not be able to do so except that which Allah has determined for you."* **(Tirmidhi)**

Having complete faith in this reality, we should tell ourselves that we should not be afraid of anything. He who believes that Allah is his Protector is unafraid and being completely unafraid results from firm Emaan. In the same way that we reassured the child by the reminder of our presence, we should reassure ourselves that there is no need to be afraid and remind ourselves of Allah's presence and closeness. Allah is our strength, our place of safety, refuge and our support. It is the same Allah to Whom all of creation is prostrating. It is by His command that night turns into day and the day turns into night. Once we start feeling that we are surrounded by Allah's illuminating presence, we will become secure in a fortress of light and the shadow of fear will be lifted from our hearts, as darkness and light cannot exist together. Peace and tranquility will then course through our veins and we will start talking to Allah like a child speaks to its parents. With love, respect, humility and complete confidence, we will address Him for all our needs and to solve all our problems.

The most important thing at times of distress is to control one's emotions and to remember that fear overcomes us only when we accept the thought that makes us afraid. To combat all these fear-creating thoughts, we will have to elevate our mind beyond them. A tidal wave threatens our safety only when we are within its reach, but if we take refuge on a mountain-top, then we cannot be harmed by it because we are out of its reach. In the same way, at times of fear and anxiety, if we turn to Allah, then our hearts will be elevated beyond the level of fear and we will reach a place where there is only peace. Whenever there is an onslaught of fear and anxiety and we feel that our hearts are sinking, then we should sit down somewhere and concentrate on trying to feel Allah's comforting presence

and support and supplicate: *"O Allah I am grateful to you, that you are always with me and that you can always see me."* Then try to imagine that we are in Allah's sight and that the shining light of His presence is encompassing us. Repeat these words also:

حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ وَ نِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَ نِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ

"Hasbiyallahu wa ni'mal wakeelu ni'mal maula wa ni'man naseer." *(Sufficient is Allah for me and He is the best of Trustees, the best Master and the best Helper)*

On repeating these words, we will feel confident that Allah is sufficient for us and due to this, fear will be dispelled from our hearts. Whenever our Prophet (SAW) faced any difficulties he would address Allah and say:

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ اَسْتَغِيْثُ ۔ (مشکوٰۃ)

"Yaa hayyuu yaa qayyummu, birahmatika astaghees" *(O the Living, O the Eternal, I seek help in Your grace).*

FINALLY

The battle of life is a tough one and whoever tries to fight it alone will be defeated, even if his own defeat may not be apparent to him. But the one who has the help of Allah, the Mighty, the Dominant, the Powerful, the Eternal Owner of Sovereignty, the Most Strong, will always be successful, even if those who are short of perception cannot recognize it. In any case, wisdom and gratitude demand that we should always remember Allah, the Beneficent, the Provider, the Preserver of Security, the King, the Protector, the Overpowering, the Bestower, the Decider, the Loving, the Trustee and the Protecting Friend.

Whenever we are overcome by any grief or anxiety, it is particularly important at such times that we focus on and pay particular attention to dhikr (remembrance) and supplication, so that the magnitude of grief and anxiety is reduced and our restless hearts find peace of mind. The One who can distance our anxieties from us has Himself said in the Quran:*"Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction."* **(13:28)**

"Or who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him and who relieves its suffering." **(27:62)**

It means that Allah, the Omnipotent One, listens to the distress of the person who is calling out to Him and relieves his distress. Our extremely Gracious Lord has liked for His servants that they turn to Him Alone with their petition to solve their difficulties and problems. When Allah delivered Yunus (AS) from his difficulties, He tells us about it in the Quran: *" So We listened to him and delivered him from distress. And thus do We deliver those who have faith."* **(21:88)**

For this reason whenever our Prophet (SAW) encountered any difficulty, he would rush to pray.**(Ahmad)**

Salaatul Hajah (Prayer for fulfillment of a need), Tahajjud (the late night prayer), the remembrances of the night and day, and reciting Quranic supplications whilst moving around – all these are the real place of refuge, the fortress of a believer. It is only due to supplication that Allah inspires us with the solutions to our problems.

Our Prophet (SAW) said, *"'Precautions are of no avail against the decree of Allah, but the supplication benefits in the case of a calamity that strikes or is about to strike. And when a calamity descends, the supplication intercepts it and holds it at bay until the Day of Resurrection."* **(Al-Hakim)**

May Allah bestow upon us His guidance to follow the straight path.Ameen.

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